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SP505-Choose Foods With Folic Acid

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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Folic Acid for Healthy Babies

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Food, Nutrition and Health

Why is folic acid important?

Folic acid (sometimes called folate) is important for growth and building new cells, such as red blood cells.

Consuming enough folic acid may -

- Prevent some kinds of birth defects
- Reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke

How much folic acid is enough?

If you are a female in your childbearing years or are pregnant, you need about 400 micrograms a day.

If you are over 8 years old and not a female in your childbearing years, you need from 300 to 400 micrograms a day.

How can you get enough folic acid?

- Eat foods that have folate naturally
- Eat foods with folic acid added
- Take a vitamin supplement with folic acid

Foods with folate

• Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts Group

Liver

Dry beans and lentils such as pinto, navy, kidney and lima beans and black-eyed peas

Nuts and seeds such as peanuts and peanut butter

• Vegetable Group

Dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach and turnip greens

Broccoli

• Fruit Group

Citrus fruits and juices such as oranges and orange juice

• Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta Group

Bread including rolls and buns, corn grits, corn bread

Cereals including dry and cooked cereals

Rice

Pasta such as macaroni, spaghetti, noodles

Foods with folic acid added

Folic acid has been added to some foods such as enriched breads, pastas, rice and cereal. Check the labels on your favorite cereals; some have 100 percent of the folic acid you need.



Vitamin supplement with folic acid

If you are a female in your childbearing years or are pregnant, you should take a multivitamin supplement with folic acid. Check with your health care provider.

If you plan to take a folic acid supplement, look for multivitamins with folic acid or a supplement with folic acid alone. The supplement should provide about 400 micrograms (mcg) but no more than 100 percent of the Recommended Daily Value in a daily dose, unless your health care provider tells you to take a different amount.

Read the Nutrition Facts for Folic Acid

Any food that has nutrients added must give Nutrition Facts for those nutrients on the label. The Nutrition Facts on a box of cereal look like the information below.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (31g)	
Servings per container about 11	
Cereal	Amount Per Serving
Calories	120
Calories from fat	0%
	% Daily Value*
Total fat 0g	0%
Saturated fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 230mg	10%
Total carbohydrate	9%
Dietary fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 2g	
Other carbohydrate 25g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	10%
Calcium	0%
Iron	50%
Thiamin	25%
Niacin	25%
Vitamin B ₆	25%
Folic acid	25%
Vitamin B ₁₂	25%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	

Can you get too much folic acid?

It is unlikely that you will get too much folic acid from food. However, it is possible to get too much from supplements.

Look for supplements with no more than 100 percent of the Daily Value for folic acid (or folate).

Test your label reading –

Look at the sample Nutrition Facts for cereal and answer the following questions.

How much of this cereal is considered a serving?

How much folic acid is in this cereal?

If you eat one serving of this cereal, what other foods could you choose to get additional folic acid?

Check your answers below.

Peanut Butter Treat

Makes 30 servings

1/2 cup peanut butter 2/3 cup raisins
 1/2 cup nonfat dry milk powder 3/4 cup powdered sugar
 1/4 cup honey or corn syrup 1 tablespoon water
 1 1/2 cups flake cereal (fortified with iron and folic acid)

1. In a medium-size bowl, mix peanut butter, dry milk powder and honey until smooth.
2. Crush cereal by placing it in a plastic bag and crushing it with a rolling pin, jar or your hand.
3. Add raisins and crushed cereal to peanut butter mixture. Mix thoroughly. Add water and mix.
4. Form into balls the size of a nickel.
5. Roll in powdered sugar.
6. Store in refrigerator for up to two weeks or in the freezer for up to three months.

Source: WIC Program

Folic Acid for Healthy Babies is one in a series of publications to help you select and prepare healthy foods.

For more information about food and nutrition, contact your local Extension office.

Answers to Label Reading

How much of this cereal is considered a serving? 1 cup
 How much folic acid (or folate) is in this cereal? 25% of Daily Value
 If you eat one serving of this cereal, what other foods could you choose to get additional folic acid? green leafy vegetables, orange, pinto beans, spaghetti

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